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Special Address

Transcription by Paul Dyer

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In the name of God, the most compassionate, the most merciful.

I am very pleased to be here today. I will start my talk by thanking the person who is responsible for that, my good friend Bob Andrews. In 1993, at the beginning of the year if I remember correctly, and after not having heard from him for more than 25 years, I am sitting at home in Jeddah and the phone rings and somebody says, "Hi Turki. This is Bob." (laughter) And I said, "Bob who?" (laughter) He said, "Bob Andrews. Do you want to come to the reunion of the class of 1968 at the White House?" I said, "Sure." (laughter). That is how our relationship resumed after many years. I would also like to thank my colleagues from the class of 1968 who made a point of attending this talk. It shows how generous they are with their time — I know that some of them are anxious to get out of here and get to the Super Bowl (laughter). I will make my talk very short. I call the class of 1968 the class that did not inhale (laughter). And you know the rest of that, I think (laughter).

I am going to break a taboo, a social taboo that is practiced in the Kingdom, in the sense that I am going to be talking about myself. Saudis in general, and I think Arabs and Muslims in general, find it very difficult to do that. But having come to Georgetown and having had so many friends from America, I find it easier to do than perhaps do other Saudis. I will start with my birth. I was born on February 15, 1945, on the day before the late King Abdul Aziz met with your President Roosevelt on one of your naval ships in the salt lakes of the Red Sea.

When they met on that ship, they struck a chord between them that has lasted a long time and that was the beginning of a beautiful friendship between our two peoples. The thing that brought King Abdul Aziz to admire President Roosevelt was that he saw in him a man not only of stature and a great leader of a great country, but a man who kept his word. The King's delivery to President Roosevelt was on the following points: "We want to have excellent relations with the United States because the United States is the only superpower in the world that is not a colonialist power." The Arab world at that time was ruled by two colonial powers, Britain and France. The King was the ruler of one of only two Arab countries at the time that were independent, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. He was seeking the friendship of the greatest power in order to make sure that colonialism in the Middle East would be eliminated, and he wanted the help of the United States in achieving that.

The other point that he wanted to talk to the President about was the question of Palestine. There was already talk that Palestine should be given over to the Jewish refugees from Europe who were going to come from there and settle in Palestine and eventually create the state of

Israel. King Abdul Aziz's main complaint to President Roosevelt was that if the Germans persecuted these people, then why give them Arab land. He asked, "Why don't you choose the best lands in Germany and give it to them?" President Roosevelt, I think, was struck by that question and didn't know how to answer it, but he made a very strong commitment to the following fact: that before the United States would take any position on that issue, that he, President Roosevelt, would consult with his Arab friends to make sure that whatever decision was taken would be beneficial to all. The late King Abdul Aziz took that promise and it was the cornerstone on which the relationship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States progressed from that time onwards.

Unfortunately, President Roosevelt returned to the United States and died in April, if I am not mistaken, and was succeeded by Harry Truman. Those of you who know Arab history will know that Harry Truman is the man most Arabs blame for the problem of the Palestinians, because in the elections of 1948, when there were all the US ambassadors in Arab countries meeting with him to tell him that there should be a more careful position taken by the United States vis à vis the immigration issue of European Jews to Palestine, and that the opinions of the Arab world must be taken seriously, he turned to them and bluntly said, "Gentlemen, I have more than 500,000 Jewish electors. I don't have a single Arab elector." He went ahead and not only helped with the creation of Israel, but competed with the Soviet Union to recognize Israel first.

From that time, there has been a general feeling not only of disappointment, but almost a sense of rejection that the Arabs felt coming from the United States. As I grew older and became a teenager, our relationship with the United States obviously developed in tremendous ways regardless of the issue of Palestine. Why? Because the Kingdom looks upon the United States as a strategic ally and as an ally on which we can depend should we be in trouble. When I was a teenager, the United States continued to help the Kingdom by allowing US companies, like the oil companies, to develop the oil fields. The US was importing our main product, oil, and it was also selling us goods. But the Kingdom was a small country at the time, and a very poor country, despite the oil income

When I was fourteen, I was sent by my father to study at Lawrenceville School, a prep school in New Jersey. I will never forget the first day I went there. I was alone. I was extremely nervous, like I am now (laughter). As I entered the dormitory, I felt somebody's hand slapping me on my backside. And suddenly I heard a loud voice of a young man saying, "Hi. My name is Steve Callahan. Who are you?" That greeting remains in my mind today as the full expression of what Americans are about (laughter). They are so straightforward, so simple, and they want to know everything. It took me a while, you know, to get over it, because in Saudi Arabia, you never hit anybody on the backside (laughter). I turned to him finally and I said, "My name is Turki al-Faisal." He said, "Oh. Like a Thanksgiving turkey?" And I said, "No. Back home, we eat turkey at Christmas (laughter)." Steve became a good friend, and those years I spent at Lawrenceville were very informative for me, because I got to know many people who became good friends. Some of them are still my friends. Most of all what I learned is that when you talk with Americans, you have to be straightforward, because they expect that from you and they are going to give you that anyway, whether you are or not. I think that is why I am talking to you in this manner, and I am breaking the taboo about talking about myself.

I came to Lawrenceville during the early 1960s, just before coming to Georgetown. In those years, the Kingdom went through a lot of problems. We had a government crisis. Our Crown Prince, who was my father, left office because of his disagreements with the King. The Kingdom almost went bankrupt because of mismanagement. It was miraculous that the

Kingdom survived that epoch, because at the time, if any of you remember, and I am sure that some of the professors here do, Arab socialism was on the rise in the Middle East and the influence of the Soviet Union was also growing. Now, there are reasons for that. I will only touch on them.

In 1956, President Nasser, the nationalistic leader of Egypt, wanted to build the Aswan Dam to tap the Nile waters and to create electricity in order to develop industries and so on. The first country he reached his hand out to was the United States. Unfortunately, he was turned down. He turned to the World Bank and the IMF at the time and was turned down again. The Soviets, like the canny communists that they were, jumped and they said, "We will build the Aswan Dam for you." So he agreed to that, and it upset the United States and its allies, Britain and France. Following that decision, the British and the French colluded with Israel to have a war with Egypt in order to occupy the Suez Canal because President Nasser, in order to finance the building of the Aswan Dam, nationalized the Suez Canal. That collusion between the British, the French, and the Israelis was really a turning point in the Middle East, because it soon led to the removal of the power of those two colonial countries from the Middle East. You know who forced the British and the French to withdraw after the War of Suez. It was the United States, because President Eisenhower, at the time, refused to accept the British and the French idea that they could send armies anywhere they wanted simply to achieve what they wanted without recourse to negotiation or diplomacy. You can't imagine the public support that President Eisenhower enjoyed at the time because of that position. Even Egyptians, which had mainly negative views of the United States policy, were grateful that there was somebody like President Eisenhower who could tell the British and the French to withdraw from Egypt.

Now, there is a brief background to the 1960s which, as I told you, meant that the Kingdom was in a very severe straits, and ending in 1964, the year I came to Georgetown, in the removal of the late King Saud as King of Saudi Arabia and the giving of the *baya* to a new king. (The *baya* in the Islamic tradition is a pledge of allegiance, and is actually a contract between the sovereign and his people. When his people give him this *baya* and that means that they choose him as their king.) And I'll never forget when I was here at Georgetown that somebody came up to me and he said, "Did you hear the news?" I said, "No." He said, "Oh. Your father has become king." I said, "No," he said, "Yes," and sure enough, the dean called me at the time, and they started talking about providing security for me — even in those days — which I turned down, because I'd never have anybody following me in those days, especially at Georgetown (laughter).

That social upheaval came at a very important time for the Kingdom, because the mismanagement that had been going on since the late 1950s came to an end. The Kingdom could look forward to a more stable, more rational progress in development, and also could turn to developing the Kingdom's relationships with its friends in the world, including the United States. In the 1950s, the 1960s, and the 1970s, the Kingdom stood fast by the United States as a supporter of the United States' policies against communism. That steadfastness was not simply because the United States was asking the Kingdom to do that, but because the Kingdom always looked upon the principles and the ideas of communism as being anathema to human thought and well being. There was a total rejection of Marxist ideas by the Kingdom, and for that reason we supported US policies against communism. We never asked for any credit for that, because we thought we were serving ourselves as well. We continued to support US policies against communism, and I am going to tell you a little secret later on about that which I have never told to anybody before.

As I finished the 1967 school year in Georgetown it was unfortunately when we had the Six

Day War in the Middle East. I am sure that many of you will remember that. For us in the Arab world, it was the tragedy of 1948, when the first Palestinian problem occurred, multiplied three to four times over, because more territory was lost to Israel and more Palestinians were driven out of their homes and more land was occupied by Israel. You can't imagine the state of total depression and sense of failure that struck the Arab world as a result of that war. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, nationalist leaders like President Nasser, using hyperbole and mass media and all sorts of tools of inciting people's aspirations and so on, were doing all that. Unfortunately, the most important thing that they did not manage to do was to find out what Israel was up to. The intelligence on Israel was abysmal. The knowledge of Israel was totally negligent. Nobody just gave any attention to that. Instead, the Palestinian problem was used then as a means to achieve political aims in the Middle East. I left Georgetown in 1967, before graduating, and the main reason for that was that I was so depressed by what happened in the 1967 war. It was a total disaster for all of us in the Arab world. My fellow Arabs who are sitting here, I see them nodding their heads in agreement. That is the only way that we could look upon it.

But in the 1970s, after I left Georgetown, I did some studies in Britain, and when I went back to work in the Kingdom, I went to my father, of all people, and started a sentence saying, "About work...," meaning that I wanted his advice on what I should do. He understood me to be asking him for a job. He turned to me and gave me a look, where he would raise his right eye up to the sky and look down at me. He said, "I didn't give any of your brothers any job, so look for your own work." (laughter). Fortunately, there were others who thought more highly of me, and I was hired as a counsellor to the Royal Diwan, which was then followed by my appointment in 1977 as Director of the Intelligence Organization in the Kingdom.

In the 1970s, the mood in the Kingdom turned from repression and poverty and lack of resources into one of abundance of wealth and of health, because the oil boom came. It came not as a result of the Ramadan War, or as it is mainly called in your country, the Yom Kippor War, but because oil prices in the 1950s and 1960s had been unnaturally depressed. The market sort of caught up with that unnatural state of affairs, and forced up the price of oil so that, instead of being sold at \$16 or \$17 a barrel, it went up to \$40 per barrel. One of my brothers was then working as Deputy Minister of Petroleum, and he was sitting with the Minister of Petroleum after work, trying to figure out how much income Saudi Arabia was going to get that year. It was 1974, and in those days, there were no calculators, no computers. Everything was being done by hand. They were going over the figures. How many barrels are we producing? And they were saying, I don't know, five or six million at the time. How much per barrel? And finally they came to the figure: "My God! We are going to have an income of \$20 billion." To them and to me, \$20 billion in those days was such an astronomical figure in a country that, for all of its past thirty years or so, had not collected more than \$10 billion from oil. Their main worry at the time was how we were going to spend this money. How many roads are we going to build? How many hospitals are we going to build? How many schools? How many students are we going to send abroad? The fact is, that from 1970, when we implemented our first five-year plan, to 1985 — that gives you five five-year plans — the country went from budget surplus to budget deficit. Most of that money was spent on development of Saudi Arabia as it stands today. The infrastructure that those from Georgetown that visited me in the Kingdom saw was mostly built in the 1970s and 1980s.

Around that time, too, there was a change in the Arab world that we in the Kingdom definitely noticed. Many others also noticed, and that was the waning of the so-called socialist nationalist politics in the Arab world. I think this was mainly due to the death of the late Gamal Abdul Nasser, who was the main proponent of that kind of policy. King Faisal, God bless his soul, did not live long after that, because in 1975 he was assassinated, and was

succeeded by King Khalid (the present King Fahd became the Crown Prince). In those days, the problems we faced in the Arab world, despite the increase in the oil revenue, were enormous. First of all, the issue of Palestine was still unresolved, in spite of Henry Kissinger's declaration that, "We are on a course to remove all aspects of conflict in the Middle East, and I, Henry Kissinger, am going to be the one who will do that."

Kissinger started with his shuttle diplomacy in the Arab world, and succeeded in getting two withdrawals of Israeli troops, one from the Suez Canal on one side and on the Syrian Golan Heights on the other side. But whenever he came to the Middle East — and your Secretary of State was not known for being very truthful, if I may say — in order to make sure that he did not convey any misimpression [sic] or misinformation between the leaders there, what the late King Faisal did and President Sadat of Egypt and President Asad of Syria did, they agreed that every time Kissinger was coming from one of these countries to the other, that he would be proceeded by a messenger from that country to the next country, so that they would brief the leadership on exactly what happened from the Arab side before Kissinger came and reported to them what he heard from that leader. That used to drive Kissinger crazy (laughter). Because every time he went anywhere, he found everybody was well prepared. He couldn't play any tricks on anybody. He couldn't tell them that Sadat told me this or Asad promised me that or Faisal indicated this. That is how, I think for a period of three years, the negotiations managed to succeed and achieve those withdrawals from both sides of the conflict area, as a result of this means of coordination. Then King Faisal died, and President Sadat and President Asad begin to have disagreements over many things, among them Lebanon.

1975 was the beginning of the horrific conflict in Lebanon. It was absolutely outrageous by any measure. There was merciless killing, whatever its basis or reason. That conflict consumed the Arab world. The US also played an important, and sometimes tragic role — recall the Marines that were blown up in Lebanon. In all that difficult time, however, the coordination between the Kingdom and the United States continued on a very important level of closeness and directness.

In 1980, when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, we in the Kingdom, with the United States, initiated a program of countering the Soviet invasion and helping the Mujahideen to repel the Soviets. I was directly involved in that situation, and now I will go back to the secret that I promised to tell you. In 1976, after the Watergate matters took place here, your intelligence community was literally tied up by Congress. It could not do anything. It could not send spies it could not write reports, and it could not pay money. In order to compensate for that, a group of countries got together in the hope of fighting communism and established what was called the Safari Club. The Safari Club included France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Iran. The principle aim of this club was that we would share information with each other and help each other in countering Soviet influence worldwide, and especially in Africa. In the 1970s, there were still some countries in Africa that were coming out of colonialism, among them Mozambique, Angola, and I think Djibouti. The main concern of everybody was that the spread of communism was taking place while the main country that would oppose communism was tied up. Congress had literally paralyzed the work of not only of the US intelligence community, but of its foreign service as well. And so, the Kingdom, with these countries, helped in some way, I believe, to keep the world safe at the time when the United States was not able to do that. That, I think, is a secret that many of you don't know. I am not saying it because I look to tell secrets, but because the time has gone and many of the actors are gone as well. Nobody is going to contradict me (laughter).

We get back to 1980 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. There was a tremendous

upsurge of support for the Mujahideen in the entire Muslim world to help them repel the Soviets from their attack in Afghanistan. As I said, the Kingdom and the United States participated jointly in this effort in providing money, logistics, and arms to the Mujahideen through the friendly and brotherly state of Pakistan, which took on the brunt, at the time, if you remember, of opposing the Soviets and being accused by the Soviets that it was the conduit for these weapons. Actually, at one time or another, there were not only Soviet over flights in Pakistan, but also bombings of Pakistani villages by Soviet aircraft. Anyway, the Mujahideen took on the fight. We continued our support for them until 1990 when the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan. At that stage, because the Mujahideen had started fighting each other, we decided that that we were going to stop all aid to all Afghan parties of whatever inclination and whatever political leaning. Not a single penny was going to go from us to any Afghan party. That included the Taliban, who came at a later stage in 1995 and '96.

I know many of you would want me to talk a little bit about Usama bin Laden. Bin Laden came to Afghanistan around 1984 as a young man who wanted to dedicate himself to help the Mujahideen against the Soviets. He had wealth, because his father left him some money. He brought with him to Afghanistan and the Mujahideen road building equipment, water drilling equipment, and all sorts of support and perhaps also some money to the Mujahideen. He was not a fighter. I will never forget when I met with the Mujahideen leaders in Islamabad, many times they would turn to me and tell me, "Look, we want from you money, clothing, arms, ammunition, food, logistical support, but please, don't send us any men. We have enough Afghans. We don't want any fighters." But these Arabs and other Muslims, they volunteered to go there because they felt an obligation to helping the Mujahideen. The Mujahideen accepted them, but mostly in secondary roles and in roles of support rather than as fighters on the battlefronts or as commanders in the field. Bin Laden was one of these people. I met with him several times in Pakistan, mostly at embassy receptions, but if you read the *Wall Street Journal*, you would think that I invented Bin Laden, and it's not true. When I met him in these functions, he seemed to be a relatively pleasant man, very shy, soft spoken, and, as a matter of fact, he didn't speak much at all.

Now, when the Mujahideen scored a victory on the Soviets and the Soviets withdrew, and then the Mujahideen started fighting each other, Bin Laden left Afghanistan in 1990 and came to the Kingdom. He felt that he had an obligation to continue fighting the "evil" — between quotation marks — that he had helped fight in Afghanistan against the Soviets. So, it coincided that year, with the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, and Bin Laden comes to one of our top leaders, and he says, "I can collect the Mujahideen from Afghanistan and we can come to Saudi Arabia. We will repel the invasion of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait. You don't have to call on your friends the Americans to come and help you." He was turned down. Now, after that he came back again to the leader, one of those leaders, and he came to me as a matter of fact, and then went to others, with an idea that he wants to go and liberate the then Marxist regime in South Yemen and destroy it and liberate the country. I told him, "That is a very bad idea. The Kingdom is not going to allow that. Don't think of it. But if you want other opinions, go and see higher authority," which he did, and again he was turned down. I believe that in those years, crucial in his makeup, he was looking for a cause, if you like, having fought or supported the fight in Afghanistan. Bin Laden turned from the easy going, laid back, shy person that I knew and met, to the person that he became later on, one of the most vicious and, I think, one of the cruellest killers in our modern history.

Bin Laden leaves the Kingdom and goes back to Afghanistan, but he doesn't stay there because there is nothing for him to do there. The Mujahideen are fighting each other and he can't get involved in that. Then he decides to go to the Sudan, which at the time had a government that was instigating all sorts of troubles in the area, and collecting from the Arab

world and the Muslim world anybody who would come and say, "I want to go fight somewhere." They would bring them to the Sudan and put them in camps, etc. He was accepted as a refugee in the Sudan until 1996. That year, the Sudanese offered to give him to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and we said, "Fine. We will take him." They said at first, "You, Saudi Arabia, have to promise us that he will not go on trial." We said, "No. No deal," because nobody is above the law in the Kingdom. Instead of coming to the Kingdom, they sent him to Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, by that time the Taliban had taken over in Afghanistan and they inherited Bin Laden from another group who had provided him refuge there. In doing so, the Taliban gave us assurances that they would not allow bin Laden to harm the Kingdom, either by word or by deed. From 199697, when the Taliban extended their rule over practically all of Afghanistan, we extended diplomatic recognition to them, for many reasons. One is that they controlled most of the country. Two is that there was peace in the areas where they controlled most of the country. And three, because we wanted to be able to talk to them. And we thought it was better to talk to them under these circumstances than to let them off to somebody else to do the talking.

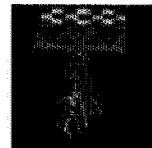
Their assurances to us not to allow bin Laden to harm the Kingdom in any way were broken during this time. In 1997, he appeared on American television, one of the networks, and gave an extensive interview, where not only did he denounce Saudi Arabia, but he also denounced the United States, and promised bloodshed, if you like, as the future of both countries. We complained to the Taliban about that, and they said, "We promise you he is not going to do it anymore." The beginning of 1998, again to an American company, network company, bin Laden said the same things, so I was sent to Afghanistan by King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah to try to get Mullah Omar to hand bin Laden to us. When I met with Mullah Omar in June 1998, he seemed amenable and willing to negotiate with us on this issue. He and I agreed that we would set up a joint committee between the two countries in which we would talk about how we were going to get bin Laden out of Afghanistan and in our hands. I went back to the Kingdom, informed my superiors of that, and waited for the Taliban to contact us, to tell us the next step. We waited until July. An emissary came from Mullah Omar and told us that they were considering this factor. They were merely in the process of establishing their side of this committee. We waited some more. September came. Nothing happens. So, the King and the Crown Prince sent me again to Kandahar and I met with Mullah Omar. This time, the meeting took a 180-degree turn from the previous meeting. The man turned abusive to the Kingdom and was insulting and totally out of order. He said things like, "The Kingdom should be ashamed of itself for wanting to try this upright, fantastic human being, bin Laden. You are doing this at the behest of the United States, the enemy of Islam." So, I just cut the meeting short and I said, "I am not going to take anymore abuse." As I was leaving, I turned to him and I said, "Mullah Omar, you are going to regret this act. It is going to bring harm not just to you, but to Afghanistan." When I left and went back to the Kingdom, I recommended to my superiors that we withdraw our ambassador from Afghanistan and ask their ambassador to withdraw from the Kingdom as a sign of protest at what come out of Mullah Omar, but also leaving some kind of tenuous links with them in case they wanted to talk about bin Laden. Unfortunately, they didn't.

Now, I am going to conclude my talk. Last Thursday, I went and I visited Ground Zero in New York. I must tell you that the feelings I had when I saw that place were of such intensity and enormity that I couldn't believe where I was for a while. All I could think of was those people who I saw on television throwing themselves from those windows, and these were people who were parents and brothers and sisters of other people. The grieving that someone has for someone who is lost in that way, I could share because I went through the same with

my father. It was the most painful thing. At the same time, when I saw the workers there digging and clearing the rubble I was struck by the fact that mankind has been hit by many tragedies in the past, but every time mankind recovers and comes back. I think New York is going to recover. I think the American people are going to recover from this tragedy. So, I just wanted to tell you that we in the Kingdom suffered as well, for your suffering. And believe me, the pain that you felt, many of us felt, regardless of whether the perpetrators were Saudis or not. The majority of people in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have the same feelings that I do.

And I want to thank Georgetown University again for the wonderful time that I had here in the 1960s. I tell you, it wasn't just the class that didn't inhale (laughter). It was the class that tried to smoke banana peels (laughter). Do you remember that? I promise you, can anybody imagine smoking a banana peel? But those were the days (laughter). So, thank you again. And God bless you all.

(Applause).



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